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METHODIST CHURCH INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN POLITICS

The influence exerted by the churches on political conditions was never so potent as during the slavery controversy and the Civil War and reconstruction periods. All the churches, north and south, took a conspicuous part in the slavery controversy, and from 1845 to the outbreak of the Civil War, slavery was the chief theme of the church press and the all-absorbing topic of church controversy. Then when the Civil War came, it was looked upon by the church people of the North as very largely a moral and religious struggle, and it appealed more strongly to the religious zeal of the people than any war in modern history. When the war closed there was the problem of the freedmen, which the northern churches and church leaders considered as not only a national problem, but one peculiarly for the churches and church people to solve; even before the war closed practically all the northern churches had entered the South with a determination to solve that knotty question in their own way, most of them thinking that there was but one way to solve it, and that was through the church's efforts. For these reasons it is necessary that the churches and their activities should be more thoroughly understood in order to comprehend clearly these periods; and this paper is an attempt to trace the influence of the church, particularly the Methodist, on the political situation in the South at the close of the war. The Methodist church has been chosen as the typical example for the reason that its activities were the most widely distributed and also because matter relating to that body is more accessible.

At the close of the war the Methodist Church South was naturally in a disorganized condition. In many instances their ministers had gone into the confederate army, leaving their churches without ministers, and very often the churches were closed and numerous communities were without the ministrations

tions of pastors.¹ After the capture of New Orleans by General Butler in the spring of 1862, at least two score churches in that city were left unoccupied, and in the five Methodist churches there, not a single minister was habitually officiating. The same was true of the five Presbyterian churches. In the summer of 1864 not a Presbyterian pastor was to be found in New Orleans; three of the pastors were known to be in the confederacy, one church was in the possession of the Union military authorities, and the remaining church had been deserted by its pastor who had gone north.² Like conditions were also prevalent in every section of the South, especially in those places where the Union armies had been active. In Baton Rouge a large and beautiful white marble church was standing idle and there were vacant churches at Newbern, North Carolina, Vicksburg, Natchez, Pensacola, Memphis, and many other places.³

This condition of the churches in the South was made known to the northern church people, mainly through letters written by army chaplains to their church papers. The several church periodicals, throughout the war, were filled with war news, and in a prominent place, often on the front page, appeared some sort of direct communication from the seat of war. Many times these letters contained information concerning the condition of the churches in the particular locality from which the letter was written. Thus the South, early in the war, was brought to the attention of northern church people as a fit field for immediate missionary effort; and after the emancipation proclamation the great hosts of ignorant and needy freedmen, swarming after every northern army, made a still stronger appeal to the missionary zeal of the Christian people of the North. As early as 1862 there are found church organizations such as ministers' meetings⁴ and annual conferences passing resolutions urging the general missionary society of the church to take possession

¹ R. L. Stanton, *The Church and the Rebellion* (New York, 1864), 332-334; *Christian Advocate and Journal*, October 9, 1862.

² E. McPherson, *Political History of the United States during the Great Rebellion* (Washington, 1864), 545; report of a committee commissioned by the provost marshal general of the department of the gulf to investigate the condition of Presbyterian and Baptist churches in New Orleans.

³ *Christian Advocate and Journal*, February 4, 1864.

⁴ Minutes of the Boston Methodist Preachers' Meeting, October 13, 1862; Minutes of the Philadelphia Methodist Preachers' Meeting, November, 1862.

of the South as a missionary field. Accordingly in 1864 the Methodist missionary society made an appropriation of \$35,000 for work in the confederate states,⁵ and during the last two years of the war twenty-one regularly ordained ministers were sent into the South as missionaries, besides numerous teachers and other workers.⁶ As soon as the war was ended the number of these northern church workers in the South rapidly increased, and by 1869 the "Northern Methodist Church," as it was termed in the South, had succeeded in organizing ten new annual conferences as follows: the Holston conference, organized at Athens, Tennessee, June 1, 1865; the Mississippi conference organized the same year; the South Carolina and Tennessee conferences organized in 1866; the Texas, Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama conferences organized in 1867; and the Louisiana and North Carolina conferences organized in 1869.⁷ In 1867 there were 66,040 members and 16,447 probationers reported, and 225 charges, in these new southern conferences.⁸ By 1871 the membership of these churches had increased to 135,442 and the number of the preachers had become 630. Of the preachers 260 were white and 370 were colored, while of the membership only 47,000 were white and 88,425 were colored.⁹ In one of the numbers of *Harper's Weekly* for 1866¹⁰ is a full-page picture of the Mississippi mission conference, one of these new northern Methodist conferences, taken at its session in New Orleans; and the picture is typical of the other new southern conferences in the proportion of white to Negro members. The picture shows five white members seated in front and twelve colored members standing proudly behind. Most, if not all, of these white members were northern men, and included Rev. J. P. Newman, afterwards a bishop, Rev. N. L. Brakeman from Indiana, at that time a chaplain in the Union army, Rev. H. G. Jackson also of Indiana, Rev. W. M. Henry of New York state, and R. H. Doisey whose former history it has been impossible to discover.

⁵ *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1864, pp. 629, 630.

⁶ W. W. Sweet, *Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1912), 96-110.

⁷ *Methodist Quarterly Review*, January, 1872, pp. 103-126.

⁸ General Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1867.

⁹ *Methodist Quarterly Review*, January, 1872.

¹⁰ *Harper's Weekly*, March 3, 1866, p. 132.

Besides the Methodist Episcopal Church, two northern Negro churches, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the former having been organized in Philadelphia in 1816 and the latter in New York, 1820, came into the South before the war was over, and immediately began a successful campaign for winning the southern Negro.¹¹ Many of the prominent leaders of both these churches in the South at this period were from the North. Rev. James W. Hood of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, afterwards a bishop in his denomination, was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and was appointed to do missionary work in the South in 1861;¹² Rev. R. H. Cain of South Carolina political notoriety, and later a bishop in the African Methodist Church, was also a northern Negro.¹³

Naturally the Negro, at the close of the war, was suspicious of the southern churches, and the Negro membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, rapidly decreased, most of them going into the northern Negro churches. In 1861 the Methodist Church, South, had more than 200,000 colored members and 180,000 children under instruction, but in 1866 a colored membership of only 78,000 remained.¹⁴ The statistics of the African Methodist Church show the rapid growth of the Negro churches immediately after the war. In 1866 the African Methodist Church had in round numbers only 50,000 members, 285 preachers, and 285 churches, while ten years later, in 1876, the traveling preachers had increased to 1,832, the number of local preachers had reached the astonishing number of 7,928, and the membership totaled 391,044, an increase of over two hundred and fifty thousand in ten years.¹⁵ There was a like exodus of colored

¹¹ W. L. Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama* (New York, 1905), 649.

¹² D. W. Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature* (Toronto, 1902), 50.

¹³ J. S. Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina, 1865-1877* (Columbia, 1905), 109, 110. "Daddy" Cain was a northern Negro who got that sobriquet by his efforts to mimic the ways of the old-time southern Negro.

¹⁴ Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 647

¹⁵ G. W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America, 1619-1880* (New York, 1883), 454-457. In 1868, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church reported 694 preachers and 164,000 members. In 1864 a plan of union for these two largest Negro churches was proposed, but was rejected in 1868 by the general conference of the African Methodist Church. *Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1868, p. 481.

members from the Southern Presbyterian Church, and it has been estimated that seventy per cent of them went into the African Methodist or colored Baptist churches, though some went into the Northern Presbyterian Church, which like the Methodist church had come into the South at the close of the war, to do missionary work.¹⁶ The blame for this great exodus of colored members from the southern churches has been laid largely upon the new leaders of the Negro race from the North, who habitually counselled the Negro to look upon the southerner as his natural enemy;¹⁷ but there is evidence to show that this was not the only cause for the transfer of colored members from the southern churches into the northern and Negro churches. "My negro membership," writes a minister of the Methodist Church, South, speaking of his congregation immediately after the war, "was large and a somewhat puzzling factor in our work. Our custom before the war was, to have our colored people sit in the rear seats below or in the gallery, and to give them an afternoon service about twice a month. But now they were free and beginning to assert their independence. I told them of the organization of their people in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Zion Methodists, and believing they would be better in that Church than in ours, I called their leaders together, and explained it to them, to go into that organization. A letter to this effect soon brought a representative of that Church to see me. We got the colored folks together, and after a little talk they agreed to go in a body to that Church. So I took the church register and transferred them. The work was done and all were satisfied."¹⁸ This testimony would seem to indicate that the northern missionary and the other "new friends" of the Negro were not the only ones who advised him to leave the church of his former master.

The fact in the case seems to be that immediately after the war the southern churches pretty generally welcomed northern

¹⁶ B. T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro* (New York, 1909), 1:275.

¹⁷ Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 647. Fleming places the northern churches and the northern missionary, who came into the South at the close of the war, in the worst possible light, and credits them with a large share of the responsibility of winning the Negro away from the southern churches.

¹⁸ D. Sullins, *Recollections of an Old Man, Seventy Years in Dixie* (Cleveland, Tennessee, 1910), 327. The author of these recollections was a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and served churches in Virginia and Tennessee.

aid in caring for the Negro. This at least is the opinion one reaches from the comments of the southern church press. One editor says that they will meet in the spirit of Christ the northern missionary who comes among them to do good, also stating that they, the southerners, do not intend to be outdone in deeds of kindness toward the Negro race.¹⁹ Another southern editor asserts that the people of the South will rejoice if the "northern Christians" do half as much as they declare they intend to do for the Negro. This kindly feeling for the Negro and the northern missionary soon underwent, however, a marked change;²⁰ and this revulsion of feeling was caused by the political activity displayed by the Negro ministers and their white leaders from the North.

Tourgée in his story *Bricks Without Straw* well describes the intimate way in which the Negro associates his religion with his politics. "Accustomed to regard their race as peculiarly dependent upon the Divine aid, because of the lowly position they had so long occupied, they had become habituated to associate political and religious interests. The helplessness of servitude left no room for hope except through the trustfulness of faith . . . For this reason the political and religious interests and emotions of this people are quite inseparable. Wherever they meet to worship, there they will meet to consult of their plans, hopes and progress . . . Their religion is tinged with political thought and their political thought shaped by religious conviction."²¹ This may be somewhat of an overstatement, yet the fact very clearly remains that the Negro closely associated his new-found freedom with his religion. He had heard his condition in slavery compared so frequently with that of the Jews of Egypt that he came very naturally to the conclusion that his freedom was brought about, as was that of the Jews, by direct divine intervention. Then when he was given the right of citizenship he looked upon that as another indication of divine favor, and so he came to associate his politics and his religion in this natural way.

The membership and ministry of these northern churches,

¹⁹ *The Southern Christian Advocate*, September 21, 1865, quoted in *Methodist Quarterly Review*, January, 1866.

²⁰ *Richmond Christian Advocate*, October 26, 1865, quoted in *ibid.*

²¹ A. W. Tourgée, *Bricks without Straw* (New York, 1880), 184.

planted in the South at the close of the war, were Republicans and supporters of the radical reconstruction policies. The Methodist Episcopal Church had had an extremely loyal record during the war, having furnished over five hundred chaplains for the Union armies and navies;²² and thousands of its members had enlisted in the Union ranks.²³ Mr. Lincoln himself stated in an address to a Methodist delegation representing the general conference of 1864 "that the Methodist Episcopal Church sent more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to heaven than any."²⁴ In fact loyalty to the government of the United States had become practically a part of the Methodist creed, and disloyalty was discredited as much as the worst types of heresy. In Missouri every minister admitted to orders and every member received into the church was compelled to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, and in some instances whole conferences took the oath in a body. The New York east conference, one of the most influential conferences in the denomination, at its session in 1863, determined by a vote of the members to have the oath of allegiance administered to the whole body. Accordingly a United States district judge was brought in to administer the oath, and the oath and the names of those who signed it were printed in the minutes for that year.²⁵ Naturally with such a record back of it the Methodist church in the North had become strongly Republican, and the leaders in the church enthusiastic supporters of the radical wing of the party.

Another reason which caused the Methodist church generally to take a radical position in politics at the close of the war was because of the Negro. During the war many northern people and especially the church people had come to idealize the Negro of the South, and any illtreatment of him, real or imaginary, at the hands of his former masters was very strongly resented by them. The great mass of ignorant and helpless Negroes at the South naturally appealed to the sympathies of Christian people. The church press, the pulpit, and the numerous annual conferences urged the establishment of a freedman's bureau from its

²² Sweet, *Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War*, 133-141.

²³ *Ibid.*, 92-95.

²⁴ McPherson, *United States during the Rebellion*, 499.

²⁵ Sweet, *Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War*, 70, 71; Minutes of the New York East Conference, 1863, p. 8.

very earliest conception. Among the resolutions of the general conference of 1864 is one stating "that the best interests of the Freedmen, and of the country demand legislation that shall foster and protect this people."²⁶ And when finally the freedman's bureau was established it found no more loyal supporters than the Methodist press and pulpit.²⁷ Methodist leaders had urged from the beginning of the war not only emancipation but the enfranchisement of the Negro. The New York conference in 1865 passed a resolution recognizing the freedmen as "native born citizens entitled to all the privileges, immunities and responsibilities of citizenship, . . . including the protection of the law and the right of suffrage," and further declared that they would not slacken their efforts until these rights are obtained for the Negro.²⁸

It was quite generally held throughout the country that the Methodist church was more or less concerned in politics, both during and after the war; and it was considered in some quarters as a sort of adjunct to the Republican party. The Methodist missionaries working in the South seemed to realize that the success and perpetuity of their work there depended largely upon the triumph of the radicals in Congress and of their reconstruction policy. One missionary writing to the editor of a church paper in the North states that if President Johnson's policy succeeds "Union men, missionaries and the teachers of the freedmen" will be in danger, and every church and school house established in the South will be destroyed; and further on he asserts, "if Congress fail we fail: if Congress succeed we succeed,"²⁹ and the rapid progress of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the late slave-holding states was looked upon as auguring important results.³⁰

²⁶ *Journal of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1864*, p. 130.

²⁷ *Western Christian Advocate*, October 18, 1865. An editorial in this issue on "The Freedman's Bureau" gives high praise to General C. B. Fisk, who was an influential Methodist layman, for his work as assistant commissioner of the freedman's bureau for the state of Kentucky.

²⁸ *New York Conference Minutes, 1865*, pp. 41, 42.

²⁹ *Christian Advocate*, September 13, 1866.

³⁰ *Annual Cyclopaedia, 1866*, p. 489. "The progress of the M. E. Church in the late slave-holding states continues to be more rapid than that of any other of the Northern anti-slavery Churches, and to augur important results ecclesiastical as well as political."

On the question of political reconstruction of the southern states, the Methodist press early took an attitude of criticism and hostility to President Johnson and his policy. At the convening of Congress in December, 1865, the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, published in Cincinnati, commenting on the president's policy during the summer previous, said: "The experience of the president in the exercise of a broad and even excessive magnanimity, seems not to have been more satisfactory to him in the end, than it was to many of us in the beginning."³¹ The editor of the *New York Advocate* began a long editorial in the issue after the New Orleans riot, with "among the severest chastisements that Divine Providence inflicts upon sinning nations is giving them incompetent, obstinate and violent rulers."³² As the contest between Congress and President Johnson became more and more bitter the Methodist press became more and more open in its hostility. Finally when the president was impeached, one Methodist editor exultingly announced at the beginning of an editorial on the impeachment: "Andrew Johnson is impeached before the Senate of the United States for high crimes and misdemeanors. . . . Our readers will remember how the beastly drunkenness of Mr. Johnson, three years ago at Louisville and Cincinnati and Washington on the day of inauguration, was denounced in our columns, and how we begged the people forthwith to demand his resignation. His moral corruption has ever been a disgrace to the nation."³³ Gideon Welles in his *Diary*, commenting on the impeachment trial of President Johnson accuses Bishop Simpson, whom he calls "a sectarian politician of great shrewdness and ability," with having "brought his clerical and Church influence to bear" in order to bring about the impeachment of the president.³⁴

That numbers of the missionaries sent into the South at the close of the war by the Methodist Episcopal Church took an interest in politics and in many instances became officeholders, during the period of Negro supremacy is not at all surprising, when we consider the facts in the foregoing paragraphs. Nothing

³¹ *Western Christian Advocate*, June 14, 1865.

³² *Christian Advocate*, August 30, 1866.

³³ *Western Christian Advocate*, March 4, 1868

³⁴ Gideon Welles, *Diary* (Morse, ed.—Boston, 1911), 3:358.

could have been better fitted for the organization of the Negro into groups for the purpose of their political control by white leaders than their organization into congregations under the guidance of the white missionary, and the temptation to use these organizations for political purposes — and in some instances for their own political advancement — was evidently too strong for some of the northern missionaries to resist. But to infer that the preëminent motive of the Methodist Episcopal Church in sending workers into the South and establishing their church there was a political one or was primarily selfish is an incorrect inference. Many of the Methodist leaders in the North were absolutely sincere and unselfish in their feeling that their church was needed in the South to perform a work, which could not be performed by the church south on account of its poverty and disorganized condition. Also many felt that the Methodist Episcopal Church was needed in the South as a center about which loyal people might congregate in order to offset the disloyalty of the southern church. Dr. J. P. Newman, who was sent to New Orleans to take charge of the activities of the Methodist Episcopal Church in that vicinity,³⁵ felt that there was need of "a loyal living Church in every city and hamlet of the South," while another Methodist missionary testified that "they," the southerners, "hate the Union, the North and especially the Methodist Church."³⁶

Among the best known of these northern missionaries who got into southern politics was Rev. B. F. Whittemore who was reported in 1867 as a member of the South Carolina mission conference³⁷ and the same year became superintendent of schools for South Carolina, and still later, under the carpetbagger Scott's administration, represented the first congressional district of South Carolina in Congress. In 1870 he was found

³⁵ Dr. J. P. Newman was the editor of the northern Methodist paper published in New Orleans, *The New Orleans Christian Advocate*; later he became President Grant's pastor in Washington and was the president's intimate friend. During the last illness of General Grant he was in constant attendance upon him, and on one occasion at Mount McGregor he baptised the general and received him into membership in the Methodist church. Later Newman became a bishop and it is stated that the influence of Mrs. Grant gave him that office. *The Century*, June, July, 1908; G. F. Shrady, *General Grant's Last Days* (New York, 1908).

³⁶ *Christian Advocate*, May 25, 1865.

³⁷ *General Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, 1867.

guilty of having sold a West Point cadetship to a New York broker for two thousand dollars cash and accordingly was expelled from the house. So popular was he, however, with his Negro constituents that he was reelected by a large majority; but on presenting his credentials to Congress, his readmission to a seat was refused. The popularity of Whittemore among the Negroes was partly due to his good voice, which made him particularly attractive as a speaker, to the Negro, and also to the fact "that he sang well at his religious meetings."³⁸ Another of the missionaries of the "Northern" Methodist church who became more or less involved in the politics of the South, was Rev. A. S. Lakin³⁹ who had been sent into Alabama in 1865 and became presiding elder of the Huntsville district. Southern testimony gives him credit for being "a very shrewd, sagacious and cunning man" though with a reputation for romancing.⁴⁰ In 1868 Lakin was elected president of the Alabama State University, but he was unable to take possession because the former president refused to surrender the keys and demonstrations by the Ku Klux frightened him away.⁴¹ Lakin professed never to have preached a political sermon,⁴² though there is abundant testimony showing the reverse to have been true, and proving that he had a pretty general reputation among the people of Alabama as an "agitator and mischief maker."⁴³

A number of Methodist preachers, belonging to the northern branch of that church, were roughly treated by the Ku Klux, supposedly because of their political activity, and particularly was this true of the colored preachers. Lakin in his testimony before the Ku Klux committee tells of the whipping of Rev. Moses B. Sullivan, a white preacher in his district, who was beaten by disguised men and his skull fractured.⁴⁴ He mentions several colored preachers who also suffered at the hands of the Ku Klux, among them a Rev. Mr. Johnson who was shot

³⁸ Reynolds, *Reconstruction in South Carolina*, 132, 133; J. F. Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York, 1896-1906), 7:149, 150.

³⁹ Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 637-639.

⁴⁰ *Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* (Washington, 1872) 8:180 [Alabama testimony].

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 111, 112, 114.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 123, 127, 146.

while preaching and another colored minister, Rev. Isaac W. Dorman, who was badly beaten.⁴⁵ The Ku Klux broke up a number of camp meetings⁴⁶ which were conducted by the "Northern Methodists" of Alabama, and a number of church buildings were burned on the accusation that they were being used for political meeting and as radical headquarters.⁴⁷ Every "Northern" Methodist was a Republican, and even today in some sections of Alabama, the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church are known as "Republican" Methodists as distinguished from the southern Methodists or "Democrat" Methodists.⁴⁸

One of the most interesting cases of the rough treatment of Negro preachers by the Ku Klux, because of their political activities, is that of the Rev. Elias Hill of Yorkville, South Carolina. This case is particularly interesting because it is evidently the case upon which Tourgée bases his story *Bricks Without Straw*.⁴⁹ Hill was a cripple and lived in the yard of his brother-in-law, a well-to-do and influential Negro. In Hill's testimony before the Ku Klux committee he stated that he believed the Republican party advocated principles nearer the laws of God than any other party, and he therefore thought that it was right. He was accused of preaching politics and of other political activity among the colored people, and was nearly killed by the Ku Klux as a result. The Georgia Ku Klux report has considerable to say also concerning the political activities of the "Northern" Methodists in that state, though in most instances where violence was done by the Ku Klux it was aimed at the colored preachers rather than at the white preachers of that body.⁵⁰

The highest office received by any minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South during reconstruction was that of

⁴⁵ *Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 8:128, 162-164 [Alabama testimony].

⁴⁶ The Methodist Episcopal Church object to the name "Northern Methodist," for they claim they are the original Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1784, and therefore they are not a sectional but a national church.

⁴⁷ Fleming, *Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, 639; *Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 7:1100, 1188 [Georgia testimony]; *ibid.*, 2:13, 14, 98 [North Carolina testimony].

⁴⁸ Governor Lindsay in his testimony before the Ku Klux committee stated that: "In my county the 'Northern' Church belongs to the Republican party, and the Southern Church to the Democratic party."

⁴⁹ *Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 5:1406-1414, 1477-1479 [South Carolina testimony].

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6:93; 7:1137, 1138, 1183, 1184, 845-846, 1100 [Georgia testimony].

United States senator from Mississippi, and the recipient of that high office was Rev. Hiram R. Revels, a colored minister of the "Northern" Methodist church. Revels was born in North Carolina but had removed to Indiana in early life, where he had attended a Quaker seminary and later became a Methodist preacher and a teacher. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was serving a church in Baltimore, but at once entered the army service and assisted in the organization of two Negro regiments. While in the South he assisted in the administration of the freedman's bureau, and later located at Natchez, where he became a presiding elder in the Methodist church, and was elected to the state senate, which position he was holding when elected to the United States senate. Revels was an unassuming Negro and altogether had a very commendable record.⁵¹

While the political activities and influence of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the South was a factor of no mean importance, yet compared to that of the independent Negro churches, the African Methodist and the Zion Methodist, it was comparatively small. The African Methodist alone had twice the membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the South, and if one can judge of their political importance, from the number of offices obtained by ministers of these two Negro denominations, they were factors of tremendous power during the period of Negro supremacy. The Methodist church is a good school for the training of politicians and speakers, for it gives the layman as well as the minister plenty of opportunity in that direction, and statistics, which have already been quoted, show that the Negro churches were well supplied with these lay preachers. The Negro, too, was far more liable to preach political sermons than was his white contemporary, for the simple reason, as has already been suggested, that he was accustomed to look upon his new-found freedom as a direct gift of God; and his religion and his politics were thus closely bound together in his own mind. One Georgia Negro Methodist preacher was accused of preach-

⁵¹ J. W. Garner, *Reconstruction in Mississippi* (New York, 1901), 271. Washington, *Story of the Negro*, 2:11, 12. In 1873, Revels took up his residence at Holly Springs, Mississippi, where the Methodist Episcopal Church had established a school for the colored people called Rust Institute, and Revels sent his daughters to this school at the time my mother was one of the teachers.

ing politics rather than Scripture or doctrine,⁵² and Bishop Turner of the African Methodist Church was credited with having more political influence among the Negroes in his part of Georgia than any other person.⁵³ In South Carolina, Rev. R. H. Cain exercised great influence over the members of his race. He was the publisher of a paper called *The Missionary Record* — a strange name for a political sheet — the editor for a time being the brilliant Negro, R. B. Elliott, who held numerous offices in the state and later represented South Carolina in the forty-second and forty-third Congress.⁵⁴

A partial list of the offices held by Negro preachers, in the various southern states, during the period of Negro rule, will give additional testimony to the extensive way in which the Negro churches had entered the arena of politics. Of the fifty-seven Negro delegates in the constitutional convention of South Carolina at the opening of carpetbag rule, seven were preachers; and one of the first congressmen elected by South Carolina after the war was Rev. R. H. Cain, a preacher of Zion Methodist Church and later one of their bishops. Rev. James W. Hood of the African Methodist Church was a member of the constitutional convention of North Carolina, and also a member of the state legislature, and later held the important office of assistant superintendent of education in the state. Rev. D. I. Walker of the same church was a school commissioner and later a state senator for Chester County, South Carolina. Rev. William H. Heard of the African church and later a bishop, was a member of the South Carolina legislature and afterwards United States minister to Liberia. Rev. J. E. Wilson was a school commissioner and postmaster of Florence, South Carolina. Bishop Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Church was a member of the Georgia legislature, and also Rev. William Thomas of the same church was a legislator for South Carolina.⁵⁵ Rev. T. G. Campbell of the Zion Methodist Church was a state senator from the

⁵² *Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 6:93 [Georgia testimony].

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7:1183, 1184 [Georgia testimony].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4:774 [South Carolina testimony]; Washington, *Story of the Negro*, 2:24, 25.

⁵⁵ Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, 117, 118.

second district of Georgia, and during the war he had been sent by Secretary Stanton to Beaufort, South Carolina, to organize civil government and improve the condition of the colored people; in 1864 he had been made governor of the Sea Islands.⁵⁶ Campbell is another example of the Northern Negro coming into the South, he having been born in New Jersey and educated on Long Island, and before the war had published a book called *Hotel Keeper, and House Keeper's Guide*.

In the Georgia Ku Klux testimony the statement is made that the Negro preachers completely controlled the Negroes in their political affairs, and that their churches were conducted under political influence to the extent, that any member attempting to vote against the wishes of the Republican party would be excluded from membership in the church.⁵⁷ Testimony was also given showing that in many cases it was the manifest object of "most of the Negro preachers to elect themselves to office."⁵⁸

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⁵⁶ *Conditions of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States*, 7:815 [Georgia testimony].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7:1183 [Georgia testimony].

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7:1137, 1138 [Georgia testimony].